

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF PORTLAND

HUMBOLDT GARDENS: REPORT ON DEVELOPMENT GOALS



MAY 2009



Humboldt Gardens has been about opportunity from the start. The opportunity to demolish distressed public housing and build a completely new community that makes residents and neighbors alike proud. The opportunity to create jobs and provide business for local people in the local community. And the opportunity for residents to return and take a fresh start at reaching their life goals.

— Jeff Bachrach
HAP Board Chair

Opportunity blooms at Humboldt Gardens . . .

Humboldt Gardens goes far beyond a vastly improved physical reconstruction of the former Iris Court public housing cluster. The vision was to create a community where people are connected with each other and the surrounding neighborhood, residents can work toward economic self-sufficiency, and children grow up in a safe and supportive environment. The transformation focused on bringing renewed hope and possibility, as well as a new home, to those who live there. To this end, the Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) and its partners had project goals in a number of areas:

- **WORKING TOWARD SELF-SUFFICIENCY**
- **SUPPORT FOR RESIDENTS**
- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITY**
- **COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**
- **SUSTAINABILITY**
- **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY PROCESS**
- **LEVERAGING OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

This document describes these project goal areas and identifies the achievements under each as Humboldt Gardens blossomed into a revitalized, thriving community.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Numerous individuals and organizations contributed to the success of Humboldt Gardens. They provided invaluable assistance in a number of areas, including workforce development and employment preparation; case management services that supported the language, cultural, and mental health needs of residents; programs for youth, including onsite mentoring and construction experience; political leadership; and financial support.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Albina Head Start
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Portland Metropolitan Area
- Hare In The Gate Productions, LLC
- Human Solutions
- Humboldt Neighborhood Association
- Multnomah County Library
- My Story
- Portland Community College
- Portland Community Land Trust
- Portland Habitat for Humanity
- Portland Public Schools
- Salvation Army
- State of Oregon

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PARTNERS

- Construction Apprenticeship & Workforce Solutions, Inc.
- City of Portland
- CJ Jackson Construction
- KPFF Consulting Engineers
- Michael Willis Architects
- Portland YouthBuilders
- The ReBuilding Center
- Walsh Construction Co.

FINANCE, LEGAL, AND OPERATIONS PARTNERS

- Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll, LLP
- Banc of America Securities LLC
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- City of Portland
- Enterprise Community Investment
- Foster Pepper PLLC
- Income Property Management
- Juan Young Trust
- Key Foundation
- Oregon Community Foundation
- The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation
- State of Oregon
- U.S. Bancorp Foundation
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

BACKGROUND

Cultivating New Growth

The Iris Court apartment cluster, located in Portland's Humboldt neighborhood, was originally built during World War II as private rental housing. In 1959, the Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) acquired the collection of 10 brick buildings for use as public housing. As the years passed, Iris Court became physically and socially distressed. The layout of the deteriorating buildings isolated residents from one another and from neighbors in the surrounding community, and safety and security became critical issues. None of the 101 housing units were accessible to people with disabilities, and the quality of private and community outdoor space was dismal. Failing infrastructure became a costly long-term maintenance liability. A large number of the households struggled to secure a stronger economic footing as they raised their families. As a result of these conditions, residents felt that their children were growing up in a place that offered nothing but the prospect of failure—at home, in school, and on the street.

In October 2005, HAP received a \$16.9 million HOPEVI Revitalization Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to revitalize Iris Court. Funding from other sources supplemented the grant, providing a total of approximately \$40.5 million for the project. Because of the problems posed by the unsafe site layout and poor physical conditions, the project called for complete demolition and rebuilding. HAP also purchased a state-owned parking lot at the corner of North Alberta



▲ *Humboldt Gardens replaced the physically distressed and socially isolated Iris Court apartment cluster.*

and Vancouver streets to expand the site's footprint, increase the redevelopment possibilities, and enliven the profile of this prominent neighborhood intersection. The new community, called Humboldt Gardens, was completed in 2008 and has the following features:

- 100 units of public housing and 30 units of moderate-income affordable rentals. These housing units are contained in 13 two- and three-story residential buildings and one four-story, mixed-use building, situated on approximately four acres.
- A variety of housing options—including disabled-accessible units, loft-style studios, flats, and townhomes.
- Bedroom configurations for families of all sizes and a variety of floor plans to meet personal and cultural preferences.
- Community and supportive services located in the mixed-use building.
- A community-friendly design, with front porches, green spaces, and neighborhood connections.

Residents, the Humboldt Neighborhood Association, local business owners, and HAP's Board of Commissioners worked together to create a name for the new community. They decided on Humboldt Gardens to honor the historic neighborhood and symbolize new opportunity growing in North Portland.

WORKING TOWARD SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Humboldt Gardens emphasizes helping residents help themselves. It embodies a culture that encourages residents to work to the best of their abilities to achieve housing and economic stability and improve their lives.

- All working-able households at Humboldt Gardens are required to participate in HAP's **Opportunity Housing Initiative (OHI)**, a five-year program that focuses on career enhancement, financial literacy, and housing stability. Nearly 60 households (about 45 percent of all households) have made this commitment and will receive ongoing counseling, case management, and class instruction.
- As residents increase their income, any additional rent they pay over a defined amount is set aside in a savings account they can access if they successfully complete the program. The overall objective is for participants to become economically self-sufficient and leave

housing assistance, as well as achieve the personal goals they have set for themselves. As of December 2008, 32 OHI participants at Humboldt Gardens are employed.

- HAP has reserved 20 units of housing at Humboldt Gardens for families in the **Bridges to Housing** program. This regional program pairs intensive services, provided at Humboldt Gardens by Human Solutions, with a housing subsidy to help formerly homeless families find housing stability, income self-sufficiency, and academic success for children. At the end of two years, these families at Humboldt Gardens may transition into the Opportunity Housing Initiative program and continue their progress toward economic independence.



These families are stepping into a brand new, beautiful neighborhood with a strong sense of community. And they have the opportunity to learn from other families who are working hard to turn their lives around.

— Erika Silver
Director of Programs,
Human Solutions



▲ *Working-able residents are supported during their quest for economic self-sufficiency.*

We're asking people to do hard work and make a commitment to accomplish positive change. Residents are encouraged to plan for their lives in the long term and develop the skills they need to make those plans a reality.

— *Rachael Duke*

Assistant Director, HAP Resident Services

The **Humboldt Gardens Homeownership Program** was created in conjunction with the Humboldt Gardens redevelopment project. HAP sold 21 single-family public housing structures that were located within about one mile of the former Iris Court cluster and had become inefficient to maintain and manage. Four properties were sold at market rate, with the proceeds applied to the redevelopment project. The remaining 17 properties yielded 21 affordable for-sale homes for first-time, low-income homeowners:

- Three properties were renovated and sold to the current HAP resident.
- Nine properties were sold to the nonprofit Portland Community Land Trust to be renovated and sold.
- Five properties were sold to Habitat for Humanity to be demolished and replaced with nine new homes for sale.



Priority for purchasing the new and renovated homes was given to HAP residents currently living in the units, other HAP residents, and low-income homebuyers with roots in Portland's north and northeast neighborhoods.

▲ *Some of HAP's scattered site homes were renovated and resold by the Portland Community Land Trust at affordable prices.*

SUPPORT FOR RESIDENTS

Former residents of Iris Court have received ongoing support services before, during, and after the relocation process. New residents of Humboldt Gardens are also offered a variety of services to help them flourish in their new community.

Relocation and Return

- A team of relocation and services staff started to work with Iris Court residents in December 2005 to establish early and steady assistance during the relocation process. They helped with the search for new housing, moving logistics, and relocation expenses.
- Staff worked with all adult residents to develop individual development plans to ensure that residents would be connected to needed community and supportive services in their new locations.
- All 88 Iris Court households were relocated between March and October 2006. Households could specify where in the city they would like to live, and all were able to get their first choice.
- A large majority (68 percent) of households remained in North/Inner Northeast Portland. Most others relocated in Southeast Portland (17 percent) and Outer Northeast Portland (8 percent).
- About 75 percent of the residents who responded to a written survey in 2007 said that relocation staff was very helpful and knowledgeable about the relocation and assisted them greatly in finding their new residences.

Humboldt Gardens has proven to be a highly desirable community. Priority for housing was given to returning residents, formerly homeless families in the Bridges to Housing program, families affected by HAP's sale of its scattered public housing properties, and families displaced by rehabilitation of the neighboring Cambridge Court Apartments (a HAP property). A waiting list was established for other prospective residents, with special preference to working-able families interested in the Opportunity Housing Initiative.

- The waiting list was opened on March 31, 2008. Almost 900 applications were received the first week—more than 300 on the first day alone.
- 23 out of the 88 relocated households from Iris Court (26 percent) returned to Humboldt Gardens. The other households reported satisfaction in their new locations, including proximity to friends, family, and work.
- 57 families moved in during the first month the property was open (June 2008), and the property was 95 percent occupied by the end of September 2008. The last unit was occupied by October 31, 2008, three months ahead of schedule.

Community and Supportive Services (CSS)

Once residents are settled into Humboldt Gardens, a network of HAP and its partners helps them maintain housing stability and continue their journey toward self-sufficiency. The programs and services that are available reflect the importance placed on individual potential and growth. Close to 10 percent of the HOPE VI grant (\$1.72 million dollars) was allocated to support services for residents.

- Programs and services available to participants in the Opportunity Housing Initiative (OHI) program (see page 2) include employment preparation and placement, job skills and business training, education, transportation assistance, and childcare.
- Resident services staff members are located onsite, including an OHI specialist, a community builder, and a Human Solutions staff member to support Bridges to Housing residents.
- An onsite Head Start program serves families who live at Humboldt Gardens as well as families in the surrounding community.
- Youth services encompass academic enrichment activities, connecting youth to activities both in and outside of Humboldt Gardens and strengthening linkages between families and schools to promote school success.
- The staff community builder coordinates onsite events for residents, bringing in community resources and partners as needed.

In partnership with Humboldt School and the Blazers' Boys & Girls Club, HAP received a \$75,000 grant from the Portland Schools Foundation's Schools-Families-Housing Community Grants program. The grant supported a 2008 summer program for children living in and around Humboldt Gardens. It funded playground activities provided by the Boys & Girls Club, in conjunction with a math and reading summer school program provided by Humboldt School. In addition, a student stability specialist helped families troubleshoot any school-related issues and helped returning children with the transition back to the neighborhood and to Humboldt School.

The pocket park at Humboldt Gardens provides a home for summer programs for children. ►

Kids and families need to feel connected to their community and to their school. Together, we can build stronger connections between the school, neighbors, and Humboldt Gardens residents to keep the neighborhood growing and moving forward.

— Jamila Williams
Principal, Humboldt School



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITY

HAP considers how it can benefit the community through both what it builds and the way it builds. While Humboldt Gardens provides new, affordable housing, it also produced construction jobs, revenue for growing community businesses, and training for local youth interested in the construction trades.

- HAP set a goal of having at least 20 percent of construction and services contracts go to qualified disadvantaged, minority-owned, women-owned, and emerging small businesses (D/M/W/ESB). This goal was substantially exceeded, with 42 percent of all contracts (\$9.7 million out of \$23.1 million) going to these businesses.
- The workforce on the job mirrored the local community: 58 percent of the hours worked were completed by women and minority workers, surpassing the goal of 20 percent.
- 38 new jobs were created, providing employment opportunities for HAP residents and other low-income individuals and bettering the goal of 30 new jobs.
- Apprenticeship hours were 20 percent of the total hours worked.
- Two companies served as co-construction manager/general contractor at Humboldt Gardens: Walsh Construction (a general contractor that has completed hundreds of projects) and C.J. Jackson Construction (a smaller African-American-owned firm). This marks the Portland metro area's first joint venture between a major contractor and a certified minority business contractor.
- The project provided 10 pre-apprenticeship training positions for students participating in the Jefferson High School Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program. This 16-week program involved both classroom time and job shadowing on the construction site. The group was also hired to work 30 hours alongside the construction crew.
- A team of young people from Portland YouthBuilders (PYB) worked on one of the new family buildings, learning how to pour a foundation and frame a building. PYB is a nonprofit organization that provides educational, vocational, and leadership development programs for low-income men and women aged 17–24.

This (Jefferson) program was such a success for these kids. Students are walking away with a resumé and hands-on experience that will take them to summer jobs, college, and careers.

— Calvin Jackson
C.J. Jackson Construction

Jefferson High School students participated in a pre-apprenticeship program that involved class time and job shadowing. ►



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Humboldt Gardens was designed to end isolation and to foster connections among residents, neighbors, and resources in the Humboldt neighborhood.



The pocket park at Humboldt Gardens is dedicated to Helen Barney, who directed HAP's development efforts from 1998 to 2000. An avid walker, runner, and golfer, she knew the joys that nature brings. The pocket park is a fitting place to honor her memory.

- Front porches, windows, and backyards encourage people to interact, promoting a safe and livable environment.
- Plentiful walkways, well-lit streets, and physical connections to the surrounding neighborhood make it easy to get around. The community is bike- and pedestrian-friendly and is well served by Tri-Met buses.
- Northwest-inspired architectural design characterizes the community and blends in with nearby homes, erasing the delineation between public and private housing.
- Residents and neighbors can come together in an onsite pocket park that contains a playground, gathering areas, and picnic tables. Environmentally friendly landscaping and a stormwater swale along North Sumner Street further enhance the outdoor environment.
- The Humboldt Learning Garden is taking root on a lot adjacent to Humboldt School. The multi-purpose garden will include food cultivation by Humboldt students and Humboldt Gardens residents, an outdoor classroom, and fruit trees, with plans for an underground cistern to capture runoff for garden use.



Michael Willis

▲ *A sign on the mixed-use building recognizes the neighborhood for which the redevelopment is named.*

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS *continued*

- A central feature of Humboldt Gardens is a striking mixed-use building on the prominent corner of North Vancouver and North Alberta streets. The building serves multiple important purposes:
 - The Denny West Opportunity Center, named after HAP’s executive director, 1991–2001, provides community meeting space, along with computers and internet access for residents’ use. The center is dedicated to programs, workshops, community events, and forums that support self-sufficiency programs and build community.
 - The Humboldt Gardens Head Start Center provides educational and development services to young children.
 - A Community Involvement Office accommodates a community policing contact office and has space for community programs and meetings.
 - The Humboldt Gardens property management office is located onsite so all staff can work together as a team.
 - A 750-square-foot retail space for a local small business occupies prime corner space.
 - 74 housing units are located on the second and third floors of the building.
- Public art funding has been set aside to create highly visible artwork that will help build community while engaging neighbors as they walk or ride by. An artist will be selected to begin work in spring 2009.
- My Story—an organization that offers photography workshops for young people—will be working with Humboldt Gardens youth to tell their life stories through photography. The end result will be a permanent exhibit of photos at the Opportunity Center.

Denny West led HAP as executive director from 1991 to 2001, overseeing the creation of thousands of units of new affordable housing throughout Multnomah County. His core conviction was that every citizen deserves the opportunity to succeed. The new **Denny West Opportunity Center**, the focal point for the community’s economic self-sufficiency program, will honor and fulfill the vision of this exceptional leader.



Michael Willis

- Residents are encouraged to access the rich array of neighborhood resources, such as Portland Community College, Jefferson High School, the local Multnomah County library, WorkSource Oregon, and Humboldt School.
- The revitalization of Humboldt Gardens is anticipated to spark additional improvements and services, while preserving the area’s socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial diversity that the neighborhood strongly values.



Portland's first public/private stormwater swale manages all stormwater onsite.

SUSTAINABILITY

Humboldt Gardens was constructed in ways that sustain the environment as well as the people who live there. Sustainable approaches provide for present needs while also safeguarding resources for future generations.

- As Iris Court was torn down, more than 80 percent of the demolition and construction debris was sorted and recycled, including carpeting, metal, porcelain toilets, and woody debris. Windows, bricks, wood, oak flooring, trim, cabinets, and doors were salvaged for reuse. Masonry from the buildings was ground and used as structural fill onsite.
- 100 percent of stormwater is managed onsite in Portland's first public/private stormwater swale. Stormwater from the right-of-way is co-mingled with runoff from the buildings, flowing into a 400-foot-long swale on the south side of North Sumner Street. The vegetated swale not only keeps stormwater out of the combined sewer pipe, but also provides an attractive green space for the community.
- HAP has applied for the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) gold certificate for the mixed-use building.
- All buildings have high-efficiency double-paned windows, Energy Star appliances and interior lights, and blown-in insulation to save energy. Dual-flush toilets, low-flow showerheads, and faucet aerators reduce water consumption. Individual unit utility submeters let tenants monitor and conserve use, and green electrical power is purchased for all community and common spaces.
- The higher-density housing (50 units/acre in the mixed-use building and 28 units/acre in the family housing) promotes compact neighborhood livability.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY PROCESS

Numerous community members were actively engaged in the planning and design of Humboldt Gardens: residents, neighbors, local schools, social service agencies, and advocates for low-income people. Their ideas and perspectives greatly enriched the new community.

- HAP staff held five resident and community meetings and one resident training session before submitting the HOPE VI grant application. The purpose was to discuss all aspects of the proposed redevelopment and answer residents' questions. The meetings culminated in a strong show of resident support and acceptance of the revitalization plan, evidenced by a letter of support signed by over half of the Iris Court adults.
- A 20-member Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) met monthly from February through July 2006, with one follow-up meeting in 2007 and one in 2008. The CAC provided advice and input on relocation, affordable home ownership, resident and youth services, site plan design, and economic participation. It also served as a means of information exchange between HAP and the surrounding community.
- Four community design workshops were held in 2006 to involve the public in the master planning process. Participants helped inform all aspects of the site design: buildings, parks and green spaces, streetscapes, and architectural design.
- Four issues of *What's Up at Humboldt Gardens*, a newsletter about the project, were distributed to interested individuals and organizations in 2006 and 2007.

We were listened to. Our ideas were incorporated. Our opinions made substantive differences.

— Paul Anthony

Chair, Humboldt Neighborhood Association
and CAC member (in *St. Johns Sentinel*, 9/07)

An extensive public process involving residents and the community helped shape the redevelopment. ▼



LEVERAGING OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The \$16.9 million HOPE VI grant leveraged other funds from a variety of sources: HAP, the City of Portland, bond financing, low-income housing tax credits, conventional financing, and foundation grants. The total project budget of approximately \$40.5 million was made possible through the invaluable participation of these financial partners.

Through sound financial and construction management and favorable market conditions, HAP was able to complete Humboldt Gardens both on time and on budget, while achieving multiple social goals.

SOURCES OF FUNDING		
Federal	\$ 16.9 million	42%
City of Portland	2.0 million	5%
Tax Credit Equity*	14.4 million	36%
HAP (New Columbia lot sales proceeds, developer fee reinvested, sales of scattered sites)	5.8 million	14%
Debt Financing	1.4 million	3%
	\$ 40.5 million	100%
*Currently an estimate as final tax credit amounts are being determined.		



Michael Willis

USES OF FUNDING		
General and Administration/Community Relations	\$ 1.9 million	5%
CSS Services/Relocation	1.9 million	5%
Professional Services/Fees	6.9 million	16%
Financing Costs/Reserves	4.3 million	11%
Demolition/Abatement	1.9 million	5%
Support for Homeownership	0.6 million	1%
Construction/Infrastructure	23 million	57%
	\$ 40.5 million	100%



Michael Willis

Financing for the new community came from a variety of public and private sources. ▲



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